



# *Making Healthy Food Choices*

Healthful eating is easy. You don't need to remember a lot of rules. Just follow some easy tips and use the Food Guide Pyramid as your guide to choosing healthful foods each day. Each food group in the pyramid is equally important and provides you with some, but not all, of the nutrients you need. Foods in one group can't replace those in another. No one food group is more important than another – for good health, you need them all.

## 7 steps to healthful eating

- Start strong (eat breakfast every day)
- Pick a few (eat more fruits and vegetables)
- Mix it up (enjoy foods from all the food groups)
- Be brave (explore new tastes and try new foods)
- Snack smart (pick snacks from different food groups)
- Get moving (take a walk, sweep the floor, whatever will get you moving)

\*\*Adapted from ADA nutrition fact sheet

## What about older adults?

Recently, an adapted version of the food guide pyramid was developed especially for adults over 70 years of age. See for picture of new pyramid:

<http://nutrition.tufts.edu/publications/pyramid.shtml> There were a few important changes made to adjust to the special needs of older Americans. The new pyramid is narrower to demonstrate the need for fewer calories. One of the most obvious changes is in the base, where eight glasses of water were added to emphasize the importance of fluid intake. Lack of fluids can cause constipation and dehydration.

## What else changed?

In the bread group, whole grain products and fortified foods, such as breakfast cereals are emphasized. In the next two categories, nutrient dense foods are emphasized to get sufficient nutrients with fewer calories. This includes dark, leafy greens like spinach and colorful fruits and vegetables. For vitamins and fiber, three or more servings of vegetables are recommended. Dark green, orange and yellow vegetables often contain substantial amounts of vitamin C, folic acid and vitamin A. Vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, beets and kale add antioxidants. Two or more servings of fruits should be eaten per day -- preferably those that are have yellow, orange or red. For proper fiber intake,

whole fruits are better than fruit juice. When choosing from the meat group, researchers say to consider availability, preparation requirements, cost and 'chew-ability'. Just like the original food guide pyramid, fats, oils and sweets should be eaten sparingly because these contain more calories but little nutrient value.

### What does the flag mean?

The flag represents the possible addition of dietary supplements calcium, vitamin D and vitamin B-12 to the basic food pyramid. Since many older people are not milk drinkers, this pyramid suggests the need for calcium supplements. Lack of exposure to the sun can hamper vitamin D synthesis in the body and many older people do not properly absorb B-12 from food. It is estimated as many as a third of older Americans can't get enough vitamin B-12, which can lead to falls and dementia. Researchers stress everyone should get nutrients from foods first, and some are more packed with vitamins and minerals than others. If you are concerned about getting enough of these vitamins and minerals, see your doctor for advice regarding supplements.

Source: <http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9902/09/elderly.nutrition/> -CNN.com

### What is a serving size?

Each group in the pyramid suggests a range of serving sizes, but how do you know how much a serving is? It is easier than you think to get the recommended amounts. Check out this site for specific serving suggestions:

<http://www.nal.usda.gov:8001/py/pmap.htm>

If you are struggling with what a cup or an ounce looks like, remember these common items for comparison:

- 3 ounces of meat
  - 1 ounce of meat
  - 1 cup of fruit or yogurt
  - ½ cup chopped vegetables
  - 1 cup potatoes, rice, or pasta
  - 1 cup chopped fresh leafy greens
  - 2 tablespoons peanut butter
  - 1 ounce of cheese
- deck of cards  
matchbook  
baseball  
3 ice cubes  
tennis ball  
4 lettuce leaves  
golf ball  
four dice or a tube of lipstick

taken from ADA "The best of National Nutrition Month"